



Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom: Journey of General Education Teachers

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Abstract:

Ensuring equal access to quality education for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, underscores the significance of inclusive education. Among the pivotal figures in this endeavor are general education teachers, who wield considerable influence over the educational journeys of a diverse student body. Yet, there exists a notable gap in understanding the perspectives, obstacles, and methodologies employed by these educators within inclusive environments. This qualitative inquiry delves into the firsthand experiences of general education teachers operating within inclusive classrooms, employing a descriptive phenomenological research approach at Mayamot Elementary School in Antipolo City, Rizal. The study identifies five overarching themes: perception, challenges, adeptness in accommodating diverse students, collaborative efforts and training, and the ramifications of being a general education teacher in an inclusive classroom environment. Educators encounter various hurdles in managing diverse classrooms, necessitating traits such as resilience, continuous self-improvement, and addressing behavioral and learning impediments. Despite these obstacles, teachers underscore the importance of patience, accountability, and effective time management. Noteworthy strides have been made by adept inclusive educators in navigating diverse classroom dynamics, offering personalized support to students with varying needs, fostering engagement, and facilitating progress towards individualized learning objectives. Success in inclusive education manifests diversely, with an emphasis on tailored approaches and favorable outcomes for students with distinct requirements. These narratives underscore the transformative influence of dedicated teachers who champion the ideals of inclusive education, empowering each student to realize their fullest potential.

Keywords: Perception, Challenges, Success, Collaboration, Impact.

Introduction:

In modern educational contexts, inclusive classrooms are essential for accommodating the diverse learning needs of students in mainstream education, aiming to create environments that respect and cater to each student's unique requirements, promoting a sense of belonging and fair access to quality education. However, General Education Teachers at Mayamot Elementary School in Antipolo City encounter significant challenges in implementing inclusive setups, highlighting systemic issues.

The essence of inclusive education lies in the role of general education teachers, who must navigate the complexities of diverse classrooms to create a conducive learning environment for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. Despite its importance, there is a notable lack of understanding about the perceptions, challenges, and performance of these educators in inclusive settings, which is critical for the success of inclusive education approaches.

Inclusive education, which involves educating students with varying abilities together, has become a focal point in educational policies and practices. According to Slee (2011), it goes beyond mere placement, ensuring that all students access quality education and feel a sense of belonging. This holistic approach highlights the pivotal role of teachers in physically integrating students while providing academic and social support.

Recent research emphasizes the importance of understanding teachers' viewpoints in inclusive education. Alquraini and Gut (2012) highlight the impact of teacher beliefs and attitudes on the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms. Klavina (2020) demonstrates the connection between teachers' attitudes, teaching methods, and students' educational experiences in inclusive environments. Friend and Bursuck (2012) further emphasize that teacher attitudes and beliefs shape inclusive classroom practices and influence instructional strategies and interactions with diverse learners. Loreman and Forlin (2014) underscore the need for professional development and support for educators in inclusive classrooms, noting that a lack of resources can hinder implementation.

In the Philippines, despite a commitment to international inclusive education policies, financial constraints and a lack of educational facilities pose significant obstacles (Mori, 2015). These challenges are compounded by inadequate disability-friendly infrastructure in schools and public spaces, particularly affecting individuals with mobility impairments (Reyes, 2014).



The Republic Act 10533 and the K–12 basic education programs aim to provide inclusive, high-quality education to over 22 million Filipino students, supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) (Albert, 2016). Despite these efforts, government-funded schools face issues such as poor educational outcomes, large class sizes, teacher shortages, limited resources, and conflicting legislative perspectives, all of which impede the implementation of inclusive education (DepEd, 2015). Misconceptions about inclusive education, insufficient resources, and inadequate teacher preparation further challenge this goal.

To address these difficulties, significant training in inclusive pedagogies has been provided to help teachers meet the needs of learners with SEN, though participation among these students remains low (Mina & Agbon, 2017). The challenges of implementing inclusive education—including misconceptions, low school participation among students with special needs, inadequate teacher preparation, and insufficient resources—highlight the need for further research and exploration of effective solutions (DepEd, 2015).

Inclusive classrooms aim to create a supportive learning environment for all children, including those with disabilities. Smith et al. (2019) note that the journey of general education teachers within this inclusive paradigm is both challenging and transformative, requiring a dedication to fostering an inclusive culture, a deep understanding of diverse learning styles, and effective teaching strategies. This study seeks to bridge the knowledge gap by examining the evolving perspectives, methods, and professional development initiatives of general education teachers working in inclusive environments at Mayamot Elementary School in Antipolo City. By exploring their lived experiences, the research aims to provide valuable insights to enhance classroom practices, teacher preparation programs, and educational policies in inclusive education.

Literature Review:

This literature review provides a theoretical framework and examines relevant literature on general education teachers' perspectives and performance in inclusive classrooms. The review highlights a knowledge gap regarding teachers' roles, performance, and attitudes in inclusion settings, aiming to explore how these factors influence the success of inclusive education.

Inclusive education operates on the principle that every student deserves equal access to learning, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or individual differences. It is crucial for both students with special educational needs and those with typical development. Since the 1980s, there has been a global movement advocating for inclusive education, emphasizing the education of all children, especially those with special needs, within regular classroom settings (Walton, 2016). This concept extends to students facing exclusion, discrimination, or disadvantages, promoting an inclusive society where everyone enjoys social, political, and civil rights without discrimination (Yeganeh & Yilmaz, 2021).

Despite the prominence of inclusive education, its effectiveness requires further investigation. Schools are increasingly adopting inclusive approaches, aiming to integrate students with special education needs (SEN) into general education classes. However, research by Francisco et al. (2020) indicates a lack of conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of inclusion, due to ambiguous definitions and limited comprehensive studies. Inclusion promotes a sense of belonging among students, reducing feelings of isolation or discrimination (Hale, 2015).

Research indicates that general education teachers generally have positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities in their classrooms. They are confident in these students' ability to learn, although the primary focus often remains on social development and behavior management rather than academic progress (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017). Teachers' perceptions vary based on the type and severity of disabilities, with students having mild disabilities viewed more positively than those with severe challenges (Harkins & Fletcher, 2015). Teachers' preparedness significantly impacts their ability to manage inclusive classrooms effectively (Vancleef, 2019).

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team plays a crucial role in ensuring students receive the necessary support in their learning environments. Collaboration between general and special education teachers is essential for the success of inclusive education, requiring a shared understanding of roles and objectives (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016; Hansen et al., 2020). However, challenges such as unplanned practices and limited collaboration can hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education (Zagona et al., 2017).

Studies suggest that factors like age, gender, and years of experience may influence teachers' attitudes towards students with special needs, although results are not statistically significant (Çelik & Kraska, 2017).

Negative self-perceptions in restrictive settings can obstruct students' access to quality education and opportunities, limiting their post-high school options (Doyle & Giangreco, 2013). The groundwork for inclusive education emphasizes integrating students with disabilities into mainstream settings, as advocated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. This approach has shown significant benefits, including improved academic skills, increased participation, and enhanced emotional and cognitive development (Schnepel et al., 2020).



Inclusive education aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, fostering a sense of belonging and mitigating feelings of isolation. Collaboration between educators and adequate teacher training are essential for effective inclusive education. Despite challenges, inclusive settings offer significant benefits for students with disabilities, contributing to a more positive educational experience.

Methodology:

Design

In this research, the researcher employed a descriptive phenomenological approach, drawing from the philosophical framework developed by Edmund Husserl. This method, rooted in phenomenology, emphasizes a systematic examination of conscious experiences without bias or assumptions. The study aimed to deeply investigate the experiences, perspectives, and actions of general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. Through descriptive phenomenology, the researcher sought to grasp the essence of participants' experiences and uncover shared patterns in their perceptions and behaviors. This research design was chosen to gather necessary data from respondents and derive practical insights and recommendations from the study findings.

Locale

The research study took place in the province of Rizal, specifically within the capital city, Antipolo City, which was situated in the landlocked region of Rizal and covered an extensive land area of 306.10 square kilometers, representing 25.88% of the total provincial expanse. The chosen focal point for the study was Mayamot Elementary School, located in Barangay Mayamot, Antipolo City. Antipolo City, as the capital of Rizal Province, boasted an expansive area of over 5,210.79 miles and hosted a network of 45 elementary schools catering to the educational needs of more than 163,541 students. In accordance with Republic Act 9155 and other relevant standards aligned with the Department of Education's vision and mission, school administrators in this locality were mandated to uphold responsibilities and accountability towards learners. The legislative framework, encompassing laws such as RA 10533 (the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), RA 1057 (the Kindergarten Education Act), RA 9344 (the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006), and RA 9442 (the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), directed administrators, including those at Mayamot Elementary School, to guarantee that students obtained the necessary values, knowledge, and skills catered to their unique potentials and abilities, thereby making a substantial contribution to their overall development (Walton, 2016).

Participants

The respondents for this research comprised fifteen general education teachers from a public elementary school who willingly volunteered to be interviewed. The selection criteria included their experience in classrooms where inclusion practices had been implemented, either with or without the presence of an inclusion teacher. To ensure ethical considerations, all participants signed an informed consent form, documenting their willingness to be part of the research.

The study was centered on Mayamot Elementary School, situated in Brgy. Mayamot, Antipolo City. The sample group consisted of fifteen general education teachers from various grade levels, spanning kindergarten through 6th grade. These educators had experience teaching students with diverse needs in an inclusion setting, utilizing consultative, co-teaching, or itinerant models. Eligibility criteria included teachers with special needs in their current classrooms and those certified with either a temporary or professional certificate.

The principle of data saturation guided the final participant selection. Data saturation, as per the principle in qualitative research, was the point at which new information ceased to emerge and the researcher reached a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling was employed, targeting information-rich cases to make optimal use of limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Instrument

The main tool in this study was the researcher, who was responsible for addressing biases, detecting gaps, evaluating the literature, and conducting in-depth interviews to examine the responses of the participants. In-depth interviews, which are a qualitative method, were helpful in gaining a thorough knowledge of general education teachers' experiences and strategies as well as their perspectives on their performance in inclusive classrooms. Data collection involved interviews, reflective journals, and classroom observations. The interview questions, designed to elicit teachers' perceptions of inclusion, were asked in private settings, fostering open discussions and member checking. Reflective journals encourage teachers to document daily experiences, barriers, and solutions in inclusive environments. These multiple methods aimed to capture diverse facets of the phenomenon, and the researcher analyzed themes and categories based on participants' responses, offering insights into teachers' true feelings about inclusion and diverse student needs.



Interviews.

The interview questions were created by the researcher. Teachers were able to start sharing their opinions about inclusion and the inclusion process through the questions. The interview questions came from previous studies that recommended more investigation into teachers' perspectives on inclusion. The interview questions were divided into three categories: preliminary, developmental, and concluding.

In the preliminary question, it collected the basic demographic profile, like their names, years in teaching, and the reason they chose teaching at the elementary level. In the developmental part of the interview, the researcher asked about the experiences, challenges, and how the teacher overcame those challenges in handling students with diverse needs. The participants shared their inclusive classroom experiences, like scenarios and situations that they experienced. It also discussed their specific role and how this role and experiences shaped them as a teacher. The last part of the interview was the Conclusion part, wherein it wrapped up all the discussion made during the interview. In this part of the interview, participants reflected on the overall impact of their experience and teaching philosophy. It also gathered their suggestions on how other general education teachers could improve or change to have support in handling inclusive classrooms and recommendations that they would like to share.

Each participant underwent an individual interview in a private setting, with the researcher aiming for participants to elaborate on questions to facilitate further discussions. By ensuring the privacy of the interviews, the researcher sought insights from teachers, fostering discussions on their perceptions of inclusion and enabling member validation.

Reflective journals were provided to participants as part of the process, serving as a platform for teachers to document their daily experiences, challenges, and questions encountered within an inclusive environment. Employing various data collection methods allowed the researcher to explore different dimensions of the phenomenon. The journal was structured into sections focusing on barriers, solutions, and narratives of the inclusion process. Upon completion, the journals were collected to identify recurring themes, categorized into barriers, supports, and potential subthemes based on participant responses. Upon review of the reflective journals, the researcher aimed to glean deeper insights into teachers' genuine perspectives on inclusion and catering to diverse student needs.

Data Gathering Procedures

This part of the paper outlines distinct phases: pre-data gathering, actual data gathering, and post-data gathering.

In the pre-data gathering phase, the process began with seeking official endorsements from the Dean and the school head, indicating institutional support for the research endeavour. Following this, the research team focused on securing approvals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure adherence to ethical standards, participant well-being, and compliance with regulatory protocols. Once approvals were obtained, the team engaged in identifying potential participants, primarily teachers at Mayamot Elementary School, and introduced them to the study's opportunity. Teachers, either new to inclusion or experienced, were screened based on specific eligibility criteria, including their involvement in inclusion classes and possessing relevant certifications. Upon expressing interest, teachers were individually approached by the researcher to confirm eligibility and completed the consent process, which involved a face-to-face meeting and the provision of an informed consent letter detailing the study's activities.

Moving to the actual data gathering phase, once consent was obtained and eligibility confirmed, participants were provided with journals and instructed on their usage. Subsequent to this, participants convened with the researcher for interview sessions held at locations such as a local library or the teachers' classrooms after school hours. Information was collected through structured interview questionnaires, allowing for probing to obtain detailed responses as necessary. The researcher, during a separate session, solely observed teachers in their classrooms, refraining from collecting data from students.

Further, during subsequent meetings, teachers were guided to complete interview questions while maintaining journals to document queries, concerns, or progress. This approach enabled participants to review various aspects of the research process, ensuring its validity. The researcher was tasked with eliciting and recording participant viewpoints, focusing on perceptions of teacher efficacy, teaching strategies, and behavior management within the inclusive setting. Data analysis was conducted using transcribed and recorded interviews.

Post Data Gathering. After gathering the information needed for the study, we put a methodical plan in place to protect and handle the data safely. After a synthesis of the data's findings, we compared and evaluated the outcomes in light of previously published research and theoretical frameworks. Developing a cogent story that clearly conveys the study's findings, ramifications, and possible contributions to the inclusive education sector were also a crucial part of this phase. Throughout the research process, protected data on an online system was used to maintain data integrity and complied with ethical guidelines. Furthermore, measures to guarantee the confidentiality and privacy of the participants were put into place. Disposal is in accordance with applicable laws and moral standards.

Data Analysis



The analysis for this study is meticulously designed following the Husserlean framework (Husserl, 1913) and reveals the key elements affecting teachers' attitudes and performance in inclusive education: (1) Ensuring careful data preparation is to carefully transcribe every interview, converting spoken words into written text. Concurrently, a thorough analysis of journal entries is conducted in order to extract relevant data that summarizes the complex perspectives and experiences that teachers have in inclusive classrooms. (2) The coding process starts with open coding applied to transcripts of interviews and diary entries. (3) Finding early themes, patterns, and concepts relevant to instructors' perceptions and performance is the goal of this phase. These codes are then classified into more general categories, providing a first grasp of the major variables affecting perceptions as well as actual performance. (4) Thematic analysis takes place, exploring broad themes and trends that show up in the coded data. This phase offers a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between these components by bridging the gap between instructors' views and their actual classroom performance. Further examination reveals sub-themes within the primary categories, offering a more nuanced view of the many nuances inherent in teachers' experiences in inclusive contexts. (5) At the end of the study, significant trends and revelations are found, highlighting the connection between perceptions and real performance in inclusive classrooms. The study synthesizes these key data in the last phase and comes to strong conclusions on the influence of views on general education teachers' performance. This thorough methodology makes it easier to have a thoughtful and real conversation about the results' practical consequences for professional development, inclusive education policy creation, and teacher preparation. In general, the analytical procedure follows phenomenological guidelines, aiming to identify the fundamental meanings and patterns ingrained in the real-life experiences of educators in inclusive environments.

Findings and Discussions:

THEME 1: I Come, I Teach, and I am Happy

Perception is subjective, influenced by emotions, expectations, cultural background, and personal experiences. Teachers bring a unique mix of life experiences and worldviews to the classroom, shaping their approach to creating an inclusive learning environment. Their past experiences with inclusion, equity, and diversity have left lasting impacts on their careers. Despite diverse backgrounds, the teachers interviewed share a commitment to promoting inclusivity, demonstrating empathy and tenacity in navigating classroom complexities. They described their teaching experiences and how they handle challenging situations in inclusive settings, showing enthusiasm and dedication.

Subtheme: Dedication and Joy

Enthusiasm and dedication are crucial for fostering efficient and fair education (Rose et al., 2022). More than half of the participants emphasized the importance of these components. Teachers' joy positively impacts student outcomes, creating a more engaging classroom environment. This dedication and delight are essential for providing inclusive education that meets the diverse needs of every student.

"I am happy to teach my children, especially when they also have experiences to share in class." - Kathleen

Joy in teaching fosters a positive learning atmosphere, promoting lifelong learning and future societal contributions. A classroom where children experience happiness and contentment encourages continuous learning and skill development, enabling all students to achieve their individual goals and become self-sufficient citizens (Cunha de Araujo, 2021).

Subtheme: Personal Growth

An instructive framework that promotes continuous learning and skill improvement is vital for student success (Cunha de Araujo, 2021). Learning conditions significantly impact students' ability to set their own learning objectives and pace (Ross et al., 2022). Happiness contributes to the development of lifelong learners (Shareski, 2017a; Hansel, 2018).

"Teaching in an inclusive classroom is really exciting. We get to play a crucial role in setting up the classroom and fostering an environment where students feel accepted, respected, and valued." - Laila

Most respondents expressed happiness when students felt intellectually and academically supported. Despite initial challenges, they recognized personal growth, including patience and strength to support their students. Even when facing student behavior challenges, participants remained content, focusing on the joy of teaching and supporting student learning. A positive and supportive learning environment, along with the emotional well-being of students and educators, is crucial for successful educational outcomes (Shareski, 2017a; Hansel, 2018).

Subtheme: Patience and Understanding

Participants emphasized the importance of addressing both behavioral and learning components in inclusive classrooms. They highlighted the value of patience and understanding, driven by the joy of sharing knowledge. To overcome obstacles, educators advocate for equitable learning environments and fight for each student's right to a valuable educational experience. Teachers play a vital role in creating a stimulating and respectful environment for all children. Understanding the elements that make inclusion effective is key to its successful implementation.



"I need to understand my pupils' behavior and develop strategies on how to promote classroom discipline. I need to promote open communication with the parents and make them part of the decisions that affect their child." - Irene

Teachers' perceptions of effective instruction are influenced by the educational setting (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). This comprehensive perspective aligns with the growing body of knowledge among educators, emphasizing the complexity of inclusive teaching and the need for a customized approach to meet diverse students' requirements.

THEME 2: Students' Behavior Has Challenged Me

Navigating an inclusive classroom presents various difficulties for teachers, including managing disruptive behavior, short attention spans, and tantrums. These challenges necessitate modifying lesson plans and instructional resources to meet the diverse needs of students. For children with special needs, this includes developing individualized education plans (IEPs) and implementing varied instructional methodologies. Ensuring all students feel included and valued, especially in cases of bullying or social exclusion, requires continuous effort and collaboration with students, parents, and the school community.

Subtheme: Learners with Disruptive Behavior

Participants in this study shared the challenges of managing disruptive learners with diverse disabilities. Handling misbehavior and tantrums hinders the learning process for both the disruptive student and their peers. Kindergarten teachers noted the range of hurdles, from minor issues to complex situations involving parental involvement in addressing learning difficulties.

"The significant challenge that I experienced is a kind of child that have a special need. Actually, is challenging for me because, you need a lot of patience." - Janet

"Challenges are rewarding because you are aware of who you are. Ultimately, you've been able to make a difference in someone's life by the process of education." - Rose

Children with impairments face several difficulties, particularly focusing during classroom instruction, which affects their academic success (Jacob, Pillay, & Oyefeso, 2021). This challenge is prominent in inclusive classrooms where teachers must address diverse needs. Understanding the factors affecting these children's concentration and engagement is crucial. Tantrums, characterized by outbursts of anger, frustration, and disorderliness, further complicate the educational landscape (Raisingchild, 2020).

Subtheme: Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is crucial for newly licensed teachers (Hudson, Voytecki, & Zhang, 2018). Teachers must adapt instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of children with special needs. Engaging peers can be an effective behavior regulation strategy, such as the buddy system or peer-monitoring programs (Antonio, 2021).

"Misbehavior of students in the classroom could be a major task for me. Students' lack of interest, readiness, and short attention spans are some of the misbehaviors I have observed. To overcome this, I need to be more patient and understand why they behave like that." - Danilo

Creating an inclusive learning environment requires understanding and controlling these behaviors. Specialized methods, such as assistive technology and customized lesson plans, help students with impairments stay focused (Jacob, Pillay, & Oyefeso, 2021). Effective behavior management also involves collaboration among educators, parents, and support staff to develop interventions and coping techniques (Raisingchild, 2020).

Subtheme: Instructional Materials

Teachers emphasize the importance of patience and time management in meeting daily tasks. Despite challenges, they find satisfaction in positively impacting students' lives. Collaborating with diverse students highlights the need for therapeutic strategies and addressing resource availability, behavioral issues, and parental cooperation.

"... Teachers play as a role model in setting up the classroom and creating an environment wherein students feel accepted, respected, and valued." - Eliza

Instructional materials are crucial for teaching conflict resolution. Research on instructional technology in Kenyan schools can help teachers select and manage materials effectively, enhancing social studies education (Tuimur & Chemwei, 2015). This research provides the Ministry of Education with information on integrating conflict resolution into the core curriculum.

THEME 3: I Want To Celebrate My Success

Teachers who share their success stories in managing multicultural classrooms serve as true inspirations. These educators skillfully handle the complexities of inclusive environments, creating supportive atmospheres for learners of all abilities. Their success stories highlight the tailored assistance they provide, enabling students with varying



needs to participate fully in class activities and achieve their learning goals. Utilizing cutting-edge pedagogies, technology, and close collaboration with support staff, these teachers create accessible and engaging learning environments.

Subtheme: Overcoming Frustrations

Resolving problems in an inclusive classroom requires a multifaceted approach that considers the diverse needs of students and fosters a friendly learning environment. Teachers frequently face obstacles such as different learning rates, behavioral problems, and the need for specialized attention (Fuchs, 2010). Differentiated education—adapting teaching strategies to diverse learning styles and capacities—is one effective tactic. Collaborative planning and communication among educators, support personnel, and parents are essential for identifying and implementing successful techniques for students with various needs (Malinen et al., 2012).

"When I found my calling - or rather, my teaching job. It's not easy to teach inclusively for seven years. But I overcame it; years and years of experience allowed me to adapt, accept, and become immune. Teaching is more than just creating lesson plans. It calls for extreme patience, a generous heart, and compassion for the path you choose. It changes me from a fearful, anxious, and cowardly teacher to a more efficient teacher." - Peach

Creating an inclusive and encouraging classroom environment is crucial to overcoming frustrations (Vermeulen, Denessen, & Knoors, 2012). Encouraging kindness, compassion, and respect among students fosters an environment where everyone feels appreciated. Professional development opportunities emphasizing inclusive teaching methods provide teachers with the skills needed to overcome obstacles, promoting success in the inclusive classroom (Sarkhosh & Rezaee, 2014).

Subtheme: Student Engagement

Teachers highlight the positive impact on student engagement and understanding through innovative teaching methods. Success is attributed to understanding diverse strategies and effective classroom management. Despite moments of self-doubt, teachers find joy and success in hands-on approaches that resonate with learners.

"This is also questioning my abilities as a teacher. But when they were able to understand after giving them hands-on experiences, I am happy that we are on the same page." - Kristel

Another teacher shares a successful moment when a student with unique behavior answered a question, challenging conventional expectations.

"...the significance of this was you need to feel the student that the student with special needs is belong in the class. He/she can participate in all activities." - Anna

Student engagement peaks in small group environments, particularly with peer instructors (60%) and general education teachers (45%). Paraprofessionals (35%) and special education teachers (28%) followed (Logan, Bakeman, & Keefe, 1997). Teachers need to balance increased one-on-one and small-group instruction with reduced full-class instruction, finding ways to increase participation and response rates (Logan et al., 1997).

Subtheme: Creativity and Strategy

Success is further defined by the ability to create engaging lessons. Teachers design relatable content through interactive activities, promoting mutual understanding among students from diverse backgrounds. One-on-one conversations and facilitated dialogues help foster this understanding.

"I constantly have plans in place for tactics that could greatly assist a wide range of communication, social, emotional, and academic needs of all my students." - James

Teacher attitudes and professional development are crucial for effective inclusive practices. Insufficient professional development and lack of collaboration time are barriers to inclusive learning (Trump & Hange, 1996). However, teachers who actively participate in developing inclusive school programs have more favorable views towards inclusion (McLesky, 2001). Addressing teachers' real-world concerns is essential for the success of inclusive education.

THEME 4: I Need to be Enriched

A successful educational environment fosters collaboration and training, enabling educators to enhance their knowledge and skills. Collaboration and training together build a sense of community among educators and ensure ongoing professional growth. By exchanging ideas, addressing challenges collectively, and sharing knowledge, educators can improve the learning process. Training equips teachers with the latest pedagogical strategies, techniques, and tools, enabling them to adapt to evolving educational environments.

Subtheme: Collaborative Teaching



Teachers use various strategies to create a collaborative learning environment, such as group planning and participating in professional communities. Group projects and collaborative activities ensure that all students, especially those with special needs, receive a quality education. This collaborative effort involves greater responsibility and a deep understanding of each student, facilitating necessary interventions and management techniques for children with special needs.

"Working together with special education teachers is beneficial because they impart their skills and understanding of pupils with disabilities. They also help us develop creative solutions to issues we face in an inclusive classroom. They assist educators in recognizing each child and offering personalized and suitable guidance." - Daisy

Professional development should emphasize teamwork skills to foster collaborative alliances that enhance team teaching (Rouse & Florian, 1996). Collaboration between special education and general education teachers is crucial for delivering the best possible service and creating relevant learning experiences (Vakil et al., 2009; Wolfe & Hall, 2003). Co-teaching and collaboration ensure that students with exceptional needs access the same curriculum and receive specialized instruction, supporting their right to education (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Subtheme: Collaborative Efforts

Commitment to equal treatment involves monitoring each student's progress, especially those with special needs. Collaboration with special education teachers is vital for understanding how to handle inclusive classrooms. Constant communication and daily reports from special education teachers ensure everyone stays updated on students' development. One teacher emphasized creating a supportive learning environment by closely collaborating with peers to develop an inclusive curriculum.

"Be more responsible and know your pupils well so you can provide the needed intervention or strategy. This helps in assessing pupils with special needs and giving them the care they need." - Mica

Collaboration increases the likelihood of student success (Huberman et al., 2012; Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2014). Sharing materials, collaborating with special education instructors, analyzing data, and providing focused instruction enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness in inclusive settings (Berry, Daugherty, & Wieder, 2009; Gryphon, Huberman et al., 2012; Kilgore, Winn, & Otis-Wilborn, 2008).

Subtheme: Teachers' Training

Teachers expressed varying degrees of formal training and personal learning experiences in handling diverse students. Some acknowledged the positive impact of formal training on their planning efficiency and time management. Others emphasized the relevance of training in accommodating student differences, while some relied on informal means or personal experiences.

"...to be honest, I don't have specific training or any seminars on handling diverse students. As a teacher, I learn from my own experience. In my previous school, I created my own strategy to cater to them as one, regardless of their differences." - Hazel

Coombs-Richardson and Mead (2001) stressed that teachers must be prepared for inclusive education to prevent exclusion and ensure excellence. Formal and informal learning strategies are crucial for teacher preparation in inclusive settings. Teachers must adapt and develop strategies to address individual differences, emphasizing the need for comprehensive teacher training.

Teacher Role in Inclusive Classroom

Teaching in an inclusive classroom profoundly influences teachers' worldviews and methods. Frequent, simple communication with students of diverse needs, breaking down tasks, and presenting information in adaptable ways are essential strategies.

"As students differ, the teacher should be flexible and adjust to each student's needs. Knowing their needs, interests, and weaknesses is crucial for creating effective classroom rules and consistent responses to behavior." - Kristel

Teachers' efficacy significantly impacts inclusive education (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Hofman & Kilimo, 2014; Loreman, Sharma, & Forlin, 2013). Adequate training and resources are essential to prevent learned helplessness and ensure successful inclusion (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011).

Teacher Perspective in Inclusive Classroom

Managing diverse student needs involves maintaining composure, employing praise, and providing tailored strategies through differentiated instruction and effective classroom management.

"...by exerting more effort to understand the student's situation and behavior. The most effective strategy is giving differentiated instructions." - James



Professional development is crucial for all educators, even those not yet teaching in inclusive classrooms (Fender et al., 2011). Insufficient training in inclusion strategies during teacher preparation programs leaves general education teacher candidates underprepared for teaching students with disabilities (Hamman, 2013; Joseph, 2013). Effective teacher preparation must address learner differences and equip educators to support all students (Joseph, 2013).

Conclusion:

This study highlights the critical role of collaboration, training, and innovative teaching strategies in fostering an inclusive educational environment. Teachers' experiences and reflections underscore the importance of teamwork, continuous professional development, and adaptable instructional methods in addressing the diverse needs of students. The success of inclusive classrooms hinges on the educators' ability to work together, share expertise, and employ creative solutions to ensure all students receive a high-quality education.

The findings reveal that collaborative efforts among general and special education teachers lead to more effective interventions and management techniques for students with special needs. The emphasis on understanding each student's unique requirements and providing personalized guidance fosters an environment where every student can thrive. Professional development initiatives focusing on teamwork skills and inclusive teaching methods are essential in preparing educators to meet the challenges of diverse classrooms.

Despite varying degrees of formal training, teachers demonstrate resilience and adaptability in developing strategies to accommodate student differences. The study underscores the need for comprehensive training programs that combine formal education with practical, hands-on experiences to equip teachers with the necessary skills for inclusive education.

Moreover, the study highlights the transformative impact of inclusive teaching on educators' perspectives and methods. Frequent communication, task breakdown, and adaptable presentations are vital strategies that enhance student engagement and learning. Teachers' efficacy in inclusive settings is significantly influenced by their preparedness, resources, and support systems.

Creating an inclusive educational environment requires a multifaceted approach that includes collaboration, continuous professional development, and innovative teaching practices. By fostering a supportive and adaptable learning atmosphere, educators can ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, have the opportunity to succeed. The commitment to inclusion not only benefits students but also enriches teachers' professional lives, promoting a more inclusive and equitable education system.

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